limited repurchase facility from 3000 units to 5000 units per unitholder w.e.f. January 1, 2002. The scheme is expected to be fully SEBI compliant by December 31, 2002.

UTI has intimated that there are 25 assured return schemes with an aggregate unit capital of about Rs. 28,000 crore as on 31st December, 2001.

(b) and (c) According to UTI, it is mentioned in the offer document of a monthly income scheme whether it has assured only the income distribution or only the capital on maturity or both. As per the offer document of assured schemes, the assurance of income distribution and/or capital on maturity of the scheme is given on the basis of the Development Reserve Fund (DRF) of UTI.

Fund crunch in UTI

551. SHRI KARNENDU BHATTACHARJEE: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item captioned "UTI Chief sees funds crunch on short term" which appeared in the Business Standard dated the 21st January, 2002;

(b) if so, what is Government's reaction thereto; and

(c) the steps proposed to be taken to bail out the small depositors who have invested their hard-earned deposits in various assured income schemes of the UTI and Monthly Income Scheme like MIP 1997, MIP 1998 etc. which are likely to mature during the course of next one year or so?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI BALASAHEB VIKHE-PATIL): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) The Unit Trust of India (UTI) has intimated that as mentioned in the offer document of the respective schemes, the assurance, if any, of income distribution and/or capital on maturity of the scheme (as the case may be) is given on the basis of the Development Reserve Fund (DRF) of UTI.

Meeting of CMDs of Banks

552. SHRI NILOTPAL BASU: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that in early 2001 the Finance Minister had taken a meeting of CMDs of public sector banks on the question of NPAs and planned for major reduction by September, 2001;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the subsequent status of NPAs as on 31st December, 2001 in the nationalised banks as compared to that at the time of the meeting in September, 2001;

(c) whether the non-reduction of NPAs is also responsible for reduction of interest rate on small deposits;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI BALASAHEB VIKHE PATIL): (a) and (b) The Hon'ble Finance Minister took a meeting of Chief Executives of Public Sector Banks on 7th April, 2001 at New Delhi, where the position of NPAs as on 31.3.2001 was reviewed. The performance of individual bank in in recovering NPAs under One Time Settlement (OTS) Scheme announced by RBI in July, 2000 for NPAs upto Rs. 5 crores was analysed and a decision taken to extend the scheme by three months from 31st March, 2001 to 30th June, 2001. Banks were also advised to take strong recovery action against wilful defaulters. For smaller accounts banks were advised to utilize the forum of Lok Adalat for summary settlement through mutual consent.

According to the latest consolidated figures available with RBI, the Gross NPAs of public sector banks as on 31st March, 2001 were Rs. 53273 crores and as on 30th September, 2001 were Rs. 56613 crores. However, as a percentage of their advances, there is no significant increase.

(c) to (e) Interest rate on small deposits largely depends on demand and supply of money in the economy and not on NOAs.

Cut in Central Excise Duty on Cigarettes

553. SHRI K.M. SAIFULLAH: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether tobacco farmers have demanded reduction in central excise duty on cigarettes and waiver of interest on bank loans and their reschedulement; and

(b) if so, the action taken thereon?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI GINGEE N. RAMACHANDRAN): (a) and (b) Representation was received from the Tobacco Growers for reduction of excise duty including removal of National Calamity Contingent Duty, which is a duty of excise, on cigarettes. The same was examined but not found acceptable.

As regards waiver of interest on bank loans and their reschedulement, information is being collected.

Duty on imported cars

554. SHRIMATI VANGA GEETHA: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government are planning to cut duty on imported cars;